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ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL ADVISING. GUIDELINES.

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THIS GUIDELINE DEALS WITH THE DAY-TO-DAY ADVISING OF FOREIGN STUDENTS. SUCH ADVISING IS THE MAJOR RESPONSIBILITY OF THE FOREIGN STUDENT ADVISOR. THE ADVISOR SEES THAT INSTITUTIONAL RESOURCES ARE BEING WISELY USED ACCORDING TO THE SPECIAL NEEDS AND PROBLEMS OF FOREIGN STUDENTS. THE SOURCES OF SUPPORT, LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND ASSISTANCE, METHODS OF INFORMING NEW FOREIGN STUDENTS ABOUT THE INSTITUTION AND THE FOREIGN STUDENT SERVICES, AND A COMPARISON OF TWO ACTIVITIES (ADVISING AND COUNSELING) ARE DISCUSSED. THE FOREIGN STUDENT ADVISOR ACTS AS A LIAISON BETWEEN THE FOREIGN STUDENT AND HIS ACADEMIC ADVISOR. THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC ADVISOR IN THE SOLUTION OF ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES IS EXAMINED. COMMON DIFFICULTIES INCLUDE INSUFFICIENT KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH, A POOR BACKGROUND IN ACADEMIC SUBJECTS, INAPPROPRIATE STUDY METHODS, AND GOAL CONFLICT. TO MEDIATE BETWEEN THE MAINTAINENCE OF ACADEMIC STANDARDS AND SPECIAL PROBLEMS, FLEXIBILITY IN CURRICULUM PLANNING IS NEEDED. THE PERSONAL ADVISING OF FOREIGN STUDENTS IS HAMPERED BY CULTURAL FACTORS AND THE NOVELTY OF THE ADVISING SITUATION FOR A FOREIGN STUDENT. THE KINDS OF PROBLEMS WHICH MAY BE ENCOUNTERED, INDICATIONS OF COPING DIFFICULTY, AND REFERRAL METHODS ARE DESCRIBED. PRINTED AIDS, FOREIGN GRADUATE STUDENT NEEDS, AND INTER-INSTITUTIONAL COOPERATION ARE CONSIDERED. THIS DOCUMENT IS ALSO AVAILABLE FROM THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FOREIGN STUDENT AFFAIRS, 809 UNITED NATIONS PLAZA, NEW YORK, N.Y. FOR $0.50. (PS)

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# *Guidelines*

## ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL ADVISING

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NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR FOREIGN STUDENT AFFAIRS

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# ACADEMIC AND PERSONAL ADVISING

## INTRODUCTION

This *Guideline* deals with the day-to-day advising of foreign students. It is written for the Foreign Student Adviser, on the assumption that "advising" is *his major responsibility* in work with foreign students.* It is also intended for any of his faculty or administrative colleagues who are involved in the advising of foreign students and for whom some of the material might be adapted by the reader for use at his own institution.

The very appointment of a person designated as Foreign Student Adviser, or by any other title which embodies this function, is, presumably, evidence that the institution recognizes its responsibility for a special advisory service if it intends to admit foreign students. It is therefore hoped that this *Guideline* will be regarded by its widest audience as the focal *Guideline*, and by the Foreign Student Adviser in particular as a valuable working tool.

## THE ROLE OF THE FOREIGN STUDENT ADVISER

Virtually all of the special services provided by an institution to its foreign students need the cooperation of other offices (such as Admissions or Housing or Financial Aids), departments (for English language instruction), or established campus and community groups or persons (for orientation, interpretation of the United States, American-foreign student relationships).

To encourage the coordination of these various services for foreign students, the trend on an increasing number of college and university campuses is to specify the role of Foreign Student Advisers as Coordinators or Directors of International Offices or Programs, or of Foreign Student Affairs. The *overall* function of the Foreign Student Adviser is then to see that the resources of the particular institution are being wisely used to respond to the foreign student's special needs and problems. In short, he becomes the focal point that organizes and integrates diversified areas of competence and responsibility.

Similarly, the advising of foreign students is made more effective by a coordinated effort that utilizes the total resources of the institution. Certainly the institution which has already developed some sort of policy or otherwise given top-level support to its Foreign Student Adviser makes it a great deal easier for him to achieve the necessary cooperation.

## THE NEEDED SUPPORT

The kind of support and its degree of formality are, of course, matters for the institution's administrators to decide and establish. Perhaps they might be assisted by the counsel of an "Advisory Committee" to the Foreign Student Adviser. This committee can be ad-hoc or permanent, according to the institution's own preference, with representation broad enough to include resource persons able to speak to any one of the various kinds of special problems or needs that foreign students present. Such a committee often includes the person to whom the Foreign Student Adviser reports, Deans of the undergraduate and selected graduate schools, and a few other key faculty persons with a known or expressed interest in foreign students. Other resource persons, such as the officer responsible for foreign student admissions, the person on campus

*Please read the reverse side of the separate page entitled, "A Word About the Enclosed Materials" sent with this *Guideline*.

responsible for English language training, or personnel from the professional services of health and counseling or the specialized divisions of financial aids and housing, can be asked to join particular sessions related to their area of competence as the need arises.* Foreign and/or U. S. student leaders may also play a useful role in the committee's work.

The committee can act as a discussion forum to generate ideas and concern, to deal with specific issues, or, if requested, to make policy recommendations. It can meet on a given schedule or at random, as the Foreign Student Adviser or the Chairman desires their counsel. Its very existence gives the Foreign Student Adviser the immediate access to other administrators and faculty that he needs. This is important where the institution is very large, with a large number of foreign students scattered across a variety of relatively independent undergraduate and graduate schools. *However, it is equally valid, and may be even more essential,* on the campus with a small foreign student population, where their needs must compete for the Foreign Student Adviser's time with other duties assigned to him.

## LINES OF COMMUNICATION AND ASSISTANCE

Developing the network of back-up people in advising can be as informal as simply making contact, through committee representatives or directly, with the kinds of people the Foreign Student Adviser may need to consult when specific problems or issues arise. In addition to those already mentioned, there may be occasion to enlist the help or special knowledge of "geographic area" experts (to consult either with the Foreign Student Adviser or with foreign students directly as "cultural advisers"); residence hall counselors; members of Host Families; and student advisers, especially returned Peace Corps volunteers and veteran foreign students. The value in involving numerous persons is twofold. First, it spreads the base of resources for the Foreign Student Adviser. More importantly, it arouses a greater campus awareness of and interest in the foreign student.

Where the numbers of foreign students enrolled are small, it may be possible for the Foreign Student Adviser to meet, early in the academic year, with all the persons who are or might be involved in the advising of foreign students, for discussion of the meaning of the cross-cultural experience. Including faculty who have had experience abroad may add significantly to the value of the session. It is also recognized that this may well be entirely unnecessary, especially with the increased international experience of many faculty and administrators.

## INFORMING THE STUDENTS

It is most important that both newly arrived and returning foreign students know that the Foreign Student Adviser is intended to be their special source of assistance, where his office is located, and what hours it is open. The relationship of the Foreign Student Adviser to the academic adviser should also be explained. This can be done through pre-arrival information and the letter of welcome from the Foreign Student Adviser that are sent overseas at the time of admission, repeated at registration time, again during initial orientation, and in whatever "Foreign Student Guide or Handbook" the institution or the Foreign Student Adviser himself may have prepared.** It can also be

*Other *Guidelines* have assumed the availability of such a committee and conceived of it as flexible enough to be of assistance in any of the eight areas of service to foreign students.

**Cf. *Guideline* on "Initial Orientation of Foreign Students," page 4, no. 8.

announced in the regular campus newspaper, on residence hall bulletin boards, in a special foreign student newsletter, or in other forms of communication with them. Since it is almost equally important to advise the faculty of the Foreign Student Adviser's presence and role, perhaps professors could be asked to repeat the information in their first classes.

The foreign students should be made aware that use of the advising service (for other than procedures required by the institution or by governmental regulations) is a matter of private choice. Early publicity is a logical first step in establishing a good rapport between the Foreign Student Adviser and the foreign student community.

## ADVISING VS. COUNSELING

At some point, either in Advisory Committee discussions or in liaison with both academic and professional resource persons, or in presenting the advising service to foreign students themselves, the Foreign Student Adviser may need to consider whether his role is that of adviser or of counselor, or both, and what the difference is in terms of his own responsibility at his institution.

At many institutions, Foreign Student Advisers are also professionally trained counselors and may prefer a title that reflects this specific training. This *Guideline* deliberately uses the title "Academic and Personal Advising" so as to include the many persons who are *not* specifically trained in counseling techniques but who still ably and conscientiously fill the role of Foreign Student Adviser.

The distinction between "advising" and "counseling" is difficult to pinpoint in the abstract. Only in the immediate situation between "adviser" and advisee" do needs, and therefore roles, take shape. Most work with foreign students usually involves advising — giving information, talking over problems, suggesting alternatives, listening, referring, and perhaps even directly guiding. Some Foreign Student Advisers with the appropriate training also counsel in the professional sense. Even with a serious emotional problem and an untrained adviser, no harm is done if the adviser is careful merely to listen and not to force matters. The Foreign Student Adviser must then determine whether or not his kind of "counsel" is adequate to the particular needs of the individual student, and if not, refer him to more specialized colleagues. The Foreign Student Adviser who recognizes the extent or limitations of his own professional competence and uses the resources of his institution or appropriate community agencies should be able to offer or obtain adequate advising and counseling for foreign students.

## ACADEMIC ADVISING OF FOREIGN STUDENTS*

This *Guideline* proceeds on two assumptions: (1) that the Foreign Student Adviser does not do the academic advising of foreign students directly, except as it enters other aspects of his advising responsibility,** and (2) that the institution has developed a workable system for the academic advising of *all* its students which assigns each student to a specific academic adviser in the particular department or graduate school in which the student is studying.

*The pamphlet, "The Foreign Student in Your Classroom," by Dr. Clara L. Simerville, has been sent along with this *Guideline* with special relevance to this and the immediately following sections. Directions for ordering additional copies for other institutional personnel and faculty are given on the FACT SHEET.

**If he *does*, the section is even more pertinent.

How these assignments are made or worked out is presumably left to the individual department or school. At one institution, a departmental chairman who had long had the responsibility for assigning foreign students to academic advisers within the department said that his own guideline here was to select advisers who had shown interest in or had had good experiences with foreign students. Undergraduate foreign students who have not yet elected a major or field of study are usually advised by a class dean, a general Dean of Students or Academic Affairs, a Director of General Studies or, in some cases, by the Foreign Student Adviser.

It is understandably difficult for any institution or department always to select advisers already knowledgeable about and sensitive to the needs of foreign students. Yet a foreign student's academic adviser may be the most important and influential person he encounters. The adviser is not only an *academic* focal point, but in many ways he may be the student's closest identification point, especially at the graduate level. He *may* be the first person aware of either academic or personal problems of the student, particularly at large institutions with a high enrollment of foreign students. Since the academic advising of foreign students can and should be far more than a formality, it is important that every academic adviser be invited by the Foreign Student Adviser to consult with him. Open lines of communication can yield mutually useful insights that work for the *benefit* of the student, without violating confidences. The range and reasons for contact between an academic adviser and the foreign student need only be limited by the personalities and interests of the two persons.

**The Foreign Student Adviser as Liaison**

If the Foreign Student Adviser is to function as the liaison person between the academic adviser and the foreign student, he will need to know the department and the name of the academic adviser to whom each foreign student has been assigned. Chairmen of all departments enrolling foreign students could routinely supply this information to the office of the Foreign Student Adviser, so that he does not have to get it from the students themselves.

Then, during the initial contact with all newly arrived foreign students at all levels of admission (presumably during or shortly after the orientation period), the Foreign Student Adviser can assist foreign students in locating and approaching their academic advisers.

To facilitate liaison between the triangle of academic adviser, Foreign Student Adviser, and the foreign student, the following suggestions, all currently in use at selected institutions, may prove helpful:

1. a form letter from the Foreign Student Adviser to each identified academic adviser, introducing himself (if unacquainted), summarizing the purposes of his office, and inviting the adviser to consult with him about any of his foreign advisees, if the academic adviser so chooses;*
2. a copy from the Foreign Student Adviser to the academic adviser of any kind of information or data sheet* that the Foreign Student Adviser keeps on each foreign student, to assist the adviser in understanding the student's background, abilities, and handicaps better (excluding, naturally, *any information that is considered confidential);*
3. a general report form for the academic adviser to record and comment

*Cf. pocket materials; also section on "Helpful Aids," page 12.

on the academic progress of the foreign student,* and to return to the Foreign Student Adviser at the end of each grading period or semester; if produced in duplicate or triplicate, copies of the report can be kept by the adviser, by the Foreign Student Adviser for his records, and by the office of records;**

4. a memo from the Foreign Student Adviser to all academic advisers defining government or university or contract regulations controlling the employment or retention of any foreign student, sponsored or unsponsored.†

Assuming that many academic advisers to foreign students are also classroom teachers of foreign students, it would be opportune if they could meet together at least once a year with the Foreign Student Adviser and other faculty teaching foreign students to discuss such things as the foreign students' performance in class, their contribution as "cross-cultural resources" in the educational setting, their special problems and needs. Faculty who may never have had the experience of advising or even teaching a student from another culture can be helped and stimulated by their colleagues who have had either overseas experience or long practice in educating foreign students in this country.

**The Academic Adviser in Action**

Initially, the academic adviser will need to discuss the student's proposed course choices and scheduling, assuming he has made at least tentative decisions, or to help him with a wise and reasonable selection. "Initial Orientation" will already have provided explanation or discussion of broad curriculum patterns, requirements, classroom routines, and so forth. The academic adviser should make certain, however, that the foreign student clearly understands what courses are required in the major or department, since the specific curriculum requirements for him may not be completely clear to him or sufficiently covered from the information given in the orientation. The foreign advisee may therefore need further clarification from the academic adviser. If the adviser has some awareness of the student's cultural and educational background, his objectives and needs, and his long-range goals for utilizing his education — which can be established through open discussion, well directed questions, or from the "data sheet" of the Foreign Student Adviser on the foreign student — obstacles to sound academic planning should be relatively few.

There are, however, some kinds of difficulties which may seriously interfere with the academic success of foreign students. The academic adviser who can spot these early can assist in their correction before they become serious.

These might include:

1. substantial deficiency in the English language;
2. inadequate preparation for certain courses (as, for example, sciences in which the student may have had courses but no laboratory experience);
3. inappropriate study methods;
4. conflict of goals, especially in cases of sponsored foreign students;

*Cf. pocket materials; also section on "Helpful Aids," page 12.

**At some institutions, the Foreign Student Adviser automatically gets the grades of all foreign students at the end of each semester and then calls the advisers about any students that appear to be in trouble.

†Cf. section on "The Return Problem," page 13.

5. lack of goals, confusion of educational objectives;
6. other personal adjustment problems (living arrangements, health, etc.)

These, of course, are not all the danger spots, but they are common ones. Most of them can be ironed out eventually if the academic adviser knows how to assist or where to refer the foreign student.

If referral is needed, surely the first person who should be contacted on the student's behalf is the Foreign Student Adviser, whose job it is to know his institution's resources. He can, in turn, refer the student to other professionals or specialists. Language deficiency, for example, may require that the student pursue some special English instruction temporarily.* Questions related to course preparation, substitution, or advanced standing can normally be answered by the person responsible for foreign student admissions and worked out by the academic adviser with his department head, or the Dean of the school.

The important point is that the adviser be made aware that the Foreign Student Adviser can and will function as liaison person, with access to a team of people ready to cope with any problem that may interfere with the student's success.

## ACADEMIC REQUIREMENTS

Unique to the academic advising of foreign students is the complicated question of academic standards. Regular academic advisers, the teaching faculty, department chairmen, undergraduate and graduate deans, the Foreign Student Adviser, and senior administrators and institutional policy-makers are all bound to encounter the question, whether by direct involvment or by referral and report, at some point in their educational dealings with the foreign students.

Most recounted experiences suggest that academic "standards" for foreign students that are any different from standards for U. S. students, whether institutionally or departmentally, would be unacceptable and unfair. On the other hand, some institutions feel that specific "requirements" for foreign students can and should receive individual departmental attention and consideration. Many institutions assume the virtual independence of the department, school, adviser, or teacher to make reasonable and justifiable allowances for foreign students in accordance with whatever internal agreements exist. Other institutions prefer a more coordinated approach and may use the "Advisory Committee" for this purpose.

Because this is ultimately a departmental decision based on the individual institution's policies or practices, no broadly valid guidelines will apply. However, some departments or advisers may be interested in reviewing academic requirements as they apply to their individual foreign advisees, to determine what, if any, steps might be taken with the approval of department or other administrative officials. Certain very tentative suggestions follow.

### Flexibility in Curriculum Planning

Assuming that *it is legitimate and necessary* to help the foreign student compensate for his handicaps, provided this is done *with careful coordination and clearance,* the institution or the department can permit, where appropriate, flexibility in the curriculum planning and the academic schedules of

*Cf. *Guideline* on "English Language Proficiency," page 4.

foreign students in line with the student's individual goals, abilities, needs, and limitations. "It is particularly important that the student be placed in courses appropriate to his interests and his level of advancement, and that his total academic load be reasonable in relation to his facility in English."[1]

Specific ways to assist a foreign student in compensating for his handicaps might include:

1. Reduction of academic load by deferment of required and/or elective courses temporarily, without loss of standing;*
2. Addition of language training assistance without penalty;
3. Assistance with study, research methods and habits (perhaps from volunteer American or veteran foreign students in the same course);
4. Extra time on examinations (in light of language handicap);
5. Substitution of essay for an objective examination.

Normally, the first step is simply to "lighten the load" temporarily and to give the foreign student up to a full year to compensate for his handicaps, with periodic examination by his department adviser or a department committee on his academic progress. Some institutions permit the department to adjust academic programs insofar as possible within the requirements and offerings to meet the student's needs in his own country.

None of the suggestions is intended to recommend lenience, relax standards, or avoid coming to terms with the problem of the foreign student who is simply below standard. "In the end, the foreign student must be judged on the same achievement standard applied to all students, both in individual courses and in his overall degree program."[2] If, after due consideration and assistance have been given him, and the student is still unable or unwilling to meet standards, then "officials can be sympathetic and can offer him help in exploring the alternatives open to him, but they must be *firm in holding to established standards.*"[3]

At any point or level of academic assistance to the foreign student, the Foreign Student Adviser should be kept informed by the academic adviser of the special efforts that are being made on the student's behalf. Similarly, the Foreign Student Adviser should make every effort to assist the academic adviser in understanding the assets and liabilities of his foreign advisee. Sincere encouragement of the student, coupled with flexibility in curriculum planning and other kinds of assistance, provide the basis for his real academic involvement, growth, and contribution.

## Academic Problems Referred

With every precaution taken for an effective and flexible system of academic advisement of foreign students, there will still be a few whose academic difficulties are symptoms of, or prelude to, deeper problems that go beyond the responsibility of the regular academic adviser.

Evidence of real emotional or personal problems, or problems involving a conflict of goals, should be referred to the Foreign Student Adviser immedi-

[1] Putman, Dr. Ivan J. "The Foreign Student Adviser and His Institution in International Student Exchange." *Handbook for Foreign Student Advisers, Part I.* National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, 809 United Nations Plaza, New York, New York 10017. December, 1965. P. 13.

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 14.

*This may require clearance with the local Immigration Office.

ately. He is the person with special knowledge about exchange programs, their terms and requirements, and should therefore be better able to help the student identify and maintain his own goals and to resolve any responsibility he may have to sponsors. Because of his familiarity with the problems inherent in cross-cultural experiences, the Foreign Student Adviser may also be able to uncover the reasons for a student's confusion over personal goals and adjustment difficulties, or his lack of motivation.

The student's difficulties may stem from a misunderstanding of what is expected of him or a misinterpretation of the "atmosphere of education" on an American campus — the casualness of relationships, especially between professors and students; the vagueness of independent, generalized assignments which leave him feeling helpless and inept; an inability to relate data and produce findings of research; an inability to apply principle in practice.

In case of serious difficulty, the Foreign Student Adviser, preferably in consultation with the academic adviser, can explore with the student his expectations, and why they have failed to materialize. The two advisers can probably help him to accept the immediate realities of his situation and meet his obligations. The Foreign Student Adviser who understands what academic patterns and hierarchies the student may be relating to from his own culture should be able to help both the student and the academic adviser to make together the kinds of academic choices that will suit the student's goals* and his department's requirements.

Not all problems, however, are simply a matter of easing academic difficulties. While some problems may appear to be purely academic in description, there may well be recognized or disguised psychological or emotional disturbances underneath. Or it may simply be that the foreign student is performing poorly academically due to stresses that pre-occupy him temporarily. Discovering, defining, and discussing the source of such "troubles," and finding acceptable solutions, take both the foreign student and the Foreign Student Adviser into the next area, personal advising.

## PERSONAL ADVISING OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

The purpose of providing a "personal" advising service for *foreign students* is, presumably, the same as providing such a service to *any* student — that is, to help the student toward independence and responsibility. Thus, a Foreign Student Adviser does not make decisions *for* foreign students any more than a professional counselor would. The difference in his work with foreign students lies in his understanding of their special problems and needs.

Pre-requisite to the personal advising of foreign students is an understanding of what it means to be involved in a cross-cultural experience. Certainly every Foreign Student Adviser should consider this one of his major responsibilities, and try to inform himself through reading, research, and, if possible, travel or other overseas experience. Helping other administrative and faculty personnel dealing with foreign students, and the students themselves, to understand the implications of the experience is also desirable.**

### The Culture Factor

It is widely recognized by persons working in international educational

*The critical topic of "The Return Problem," and occupational training and expectations, is reserved to a special section, page 13.

**A brochure entitled, "Cross-Cultural Understanding" by Dr. Ina Corinne Brown, is being prepared especially for this purpose. It will be sent with a future *Guideline*.

exchange that some amount of stress, ranging from very mild to severe, is a fairly common accompaniment to the cross-cultural experience. Crossing from one culture into another, especially when the differences are marked, may cause the foreign student's frame of reference to go out of focus in the new setting. For some foreign students, the experience of feeling like a marginal person may be intense and seem to be much more permanent than it will prove to be in actuality.

The basic challenge for the foreign student is to maintain both his individuality and his cultural identity. The student may cling instinctively to traditional patterns of behavior as security and defense against the unfamiliar or against feelings of threat from new experiences. Helping him to "adjust" does not mean making him change his cultural patterns, but rather assisting him to see patterns in context, and aiding him to adapt or develop attitudes and habits that will serve him better, under the circumstances.

There is an ever-increasing body of literature that deals with the cross-cultural experience generally, including information on adjustment and attitude change.* There are also many studies of specific cultures or cultural traits of specific groups of foreign students. These resource materials frequently offer valuable insights that can be useful to the Foreign Student Adviser.

### Beyond the Cultural Factor

Cultural generalizations may help the Foreign Student Adviser to predict or expect certain kinds of behavior and response. At some point, however, the question that always arises for the adviser in dealing with a specific, individual problem is just how much of the behavior at issue is "cultural" in nature and how much is simply a reflection of the individual involved. In the long run, it does not aid the Foreign Student Adviser in understanding the *student* if cultural generalizations are applied too rigidly. They can establish the general identity of the student, but not the individuality of his behavior.

The Foreign Student Adviser may also encounter the kind of individual who, consciously or unconsciously, *uses* cultural differences to escape the expectations of either culture. If the student is manipulating his "innocence" or "ignorance" to excuse irresponsible behavior, the problem is his irresponsibility, not his cultural difference. The "advice shopper" — the student who goes from one person to another collecting attention and sympathy — is especially adept at dodging responsibility and excusing himself.

Cultural adjustment will depend as much on the individual personality as on the cultural background of the foreign student. If the individual is genuinely willing to maximize his own personal and academic opportunities, there should be no reason to anticipate unusual difficulties, provided he is given adequate orientation and opportunities for periodic assessment and friendly discussion.

## THE ADVISING SITUATION

Many foreign students are unaccustomed to the advising situation. For some, the experience may be contrary to their established habits. There are cultures which deem it inappropriate and undignified to consult strangers about personal problems. It is therefore important that the Foreign Student Adviser have some knowledge of the approach to problems and problem-solving that other cultures take. This can come through reading, general experience and exposure, or through individual conversations with foreign students.

*Cf. Bibliography.

Encouraging some students to express themselves may require patience and tact. Occasionally the meaningful words may be in the foreign student's native language but not in his English vocabulary. He will hesitate for fear of sounding stupid to the adviser. He may think he is not saying, or the adviser is not understanding, what or how he really feels about a situation. To some extent, the Foreign Student Adviser may wonder whether and how well *he* is being understood by the student. It is often helpful to start the conversation by inquiring of the student to whom he might have taken his problem in his own country.*

This approach gives the student an opportunity to examine the roots of his values, attitudes, and motives — what kind of person he is and what the influences upon him have been. If the adviser can show that he has concern for the student and understanding of his environmental background, the student is more likely to feel comfortable with the new relationship. If the advising relationship is to be beneficial for the student, there must be inherent a mutual confidence and trust. Cultural prejudice against such a personal exchange can only be broken down as the relationship develops — as the student becomes aware of his needs, convinced of the adviser's interest and competence, and assured of the confidentiality of the information.

## The Kinds of Problems

It is virtually impossible to catalogue the kinds of problems that a Foreign Student Adviser may encounter, or should look for, in his role as a personal adviser to foreign students. These problems will be as varied and different as the individual foreign students he advises are different from one another. Many will be more or less "routine" problems — matters relating to visas, extensions of stay, work permits, address changes, and other government or university regulations — for which there are substantial resource materials. Others may actually have more to do with daily living conditions — housing arrangements, food problems, financial and budgeting problems, relationships with fellow students, professors, and the community at large** — in addition to problems related to academic difficulties or general cultural adjustment, as already discussed.

At some point, however, the Foreign Student Adviser may find himself confronting the very personal problems of mental, emotional, and physical overloading or breakdown. Knowing when to help directly and when to refer the foreign student to professional assistance can be the most important decision and competence that the Foreign Student Adviser exercises. The following sections are meant only to help the Foreign Student Adviser recognize critical needs of foreign students and establish his own limitations in dealing with them.

## Identifying Critical Needs

Foreign Student Advisers are generally the first to admit that their "competence" in this respect is part insight, part information, part conviction, and part hunch. It is, as one experienced Foreign Student Adviser suggested, an

*If not too confidential a problem, the assistance of a known and dependable student from the same culture who understands *both* cultures might be sought. He can be an effective go-between in helping the new student to understand the situation and the adviser's motivation and interest.

**Again, other institutional personnel involved with foreign students in these special areas should be urged to keep in touch with the Foreign Student Adviser.

ability to understand people at their own levels, and a "feel for the kind of complaints that bespeak serious dangers."

Recognition of the unusual psychological stress a foreign student may be under suggests that, for any individual, there is a limit to the number of functions in which the ego may engage. When a person is comfortable and secure in his cultural setting, he is more able to find ways to cope with his personal problems. A familiar environment makes it easier to cover or disguise personal anxieties. Confrontation with a strange culture may cause problems to surface for the first time. Then the foreign student may appear to be under abnormal stress, and unable to cope either with the cultural differences or with himself. If the foreign student must devote excessive energy to maintaining equilibrium, his other ego functions — such as learning, active understanding, organizing, and coping — can be impaired.

*Very generally speaking*, the kinds of complaints that the Foreign Student Adviser will want to watch for might include:

1. biological — food, rest, climate inadaptability;
2. psychological — disorientation, mild shock, depression, rigidity, inflexibility;
3. psychosomatic — illness, fainting, physical discomfort;
4. sociological — rejection by the society, rejection of the society and of authority, abandonment of goals.

Such symptomatic behavior, if perceived early, can be counteracted before serious emotional illness results. If the Foreign Student Adviser is a clinically trained psychologist, or has some other kind of training and experience qualifications, he may be able to offer direct assistance, at least initially. If not, his only course of action is referral. *To interfere too directly and to force issues under stress conditions can do real damage.* If the Foreign Student Adviser has any doubts whatsoever about his own competence to handle the problem, the first thing to do is contact the resource persons in whom he has confidence. They expect to be called upon.

**The Point of Referral**

Unfortunately, there is no standard set of guidelines which any Foreign Student Adviser can use to determine when, how, and where to refer a foreign student who needs special help. It depends in part on what kinds of resources are available on campus or in the community (professional counselors, psychiatrists, mental health clinics, general medical staff). More importantly, it is unavoidably a subjective decision — subjective for both the adviser and the student. One Foreign Student Adviser expressed his own rule-of-thumb, developed out of repeated encounters and experience, by saying that he works *with* a student *toward* referral when he knows that, in giving all he can, he still gives too little to someone who needs much more.

Helping another person to maximize his educational and personal opportunities, or to lower his goals and expectations to a more realistic level, is one thing. Inducing personality change is quite another. Reversal of actual personality disfunctioning requires a kind of therapeutic treatment that rests with the professionally trained.

If there is a campus psychiatrist or psychological counseling center, the Foreign Student Adviser will want to consult with these staff persons as to what role they can play in developing mental health services for foreign stu-

dents. If appropriate and useful, the Foreign Student Adviser can offer to such specialists some explanation or discussion of the characteristic problems of foreign students. Whether or not such specialists are available on campus, the regular health center personnel should be contacted and involved early in the total concern for the health of foreign students. Most institutions now make some kind of health insurance mandatory for foreign students.* Generally, policies cover both medical expenses and costs of counseling or psychiatric services. Some institutions absorb this charge, or build it into tuition. Others bill the student separately.

Getting the student to accept professional assistance, when necessary, may be much easier if the institution routinely publicizes its specialized facilities to *all* its students in catalogues, brochures, or during the orientation period for all students, early in the year. If foreign students are aware that professional assistance is available equally to all students, and used by many, and if the Foreign Student Adviser has real rapport with his foreign students, they will probably not resist special help or misunderstand referral by the Foreign Student Adviser.**

Once a foreign student *is* referred to specialized assistance, the Foreign Student Adviser should maintain close liaison with and follow the instructions of the professional person in his dealings with the student. The sensitive cooperation of all involved, without, of course, infringing on the confidentiality of any of the relationships, is in the best interest of both the student and the institution.

## HELPFUL AIDS IN THE ADVISING OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

Some aids have already been suggested in other contexts but merit repetition in the following checklist:

1. Student Information or Data Sheet† — kept by the Foreign Student Adviser on each foreign student (mindful of concern for the privacy of the student and available only to appropriate persons).
2. Geographic and/or Field of Study File — on enrolled foreign students, indicating not only country of origin but field of study or area of interest, career plans or intention; excellent resource for faculty persons interested in identifying potential participants in specialized academic or cross-cultural programs.
3. Form Letter to Academic Advisers† — sent by the Foreign Student Adviser to academic advisers for periodic reports on foreign students' academic progress, difficulties.
4. Form Letter to Foreign Students on Probation — urging consultation with the Foreign Student Adviser; opportunity for review of program, goals, difficulties.
5. Browsing Library — for foreign students, faculty, and administrators alike; including good, popularized books on adjustment psychology, how-to-study guides, and general references on the cross-cultural experience.

## THE ADVISING OF GRADUATE STUDENTS

Traditionally, the *academic* advising of graduate students has been re-

*Cf. FACT SHEET for further reference to health insurance.

**Cf. bibliographical reference to "Emergency Situations Involving Foreign Students."

†Cf. pocket materials.

served to the individual graduate department or school in which the student is enrolled. There is no reason, however, that the Foreign Student Adviser should not take precisely the same steps to maintain contact with both the graduate adviser and the graduate foreign student that he would take for undergraduate foreign students. Although purely academic problems seem more likely to be worked out without direct involvement of the Foreign Student Adviser, his counsel may be sought on questions related to academic requirements and flexibility in curriculum planning.

The involvement of the Foreign Student Adviser in the *personal* advising of graduate foreign students should, theoretically, be an integral part of his total responsibility for all foreign students. However, his position with regard to graduate students may be affected by institutional preference or policy. If the responsibility is in fact his, much of the effectiveness of his guidance will depend on early and continual contact with the graduate students themselves.

The "problems" they can be expected to bring to him should not be very different from the ones that undergraduate foreign students present. Presumably the greater maturity of graduate students should make them more able to cope with the normal difficulties. But age is no protection against emotional difficulties of a more serious nature, and may make graduate students *less* flexible then undergraduate students. Graduate students who are in this kind of trouble need the same careful treatment that any undergraduate foreign student needs.

The one type of problem that is common to both undergraduate and graduate foreign students is the very delicate question of return home. It has special relevance to the graduate student who has completed his studies.* It is recognized that this is a subject on which there are many and conflicting points of view. Certainly it touches both the academic and personal advising of foreign students, regardless of level of study or immediacy of return. This *Guideline* can only explore some of the factors. The position taken must be an institutional decision.

## "The Return Problem"

In the process of educating foreign students, most institutions, sooner or later, encounter the problem of the student who is unwilling to return home because he feels that his education will not be applicable to his home country's needs, or there will be no job open at his level, or the salary and prestige he could command would be inadequate. A changed political situation might also be a factor. Each non-returning foreign student poses both an immediate, individual problem and a larger, philosophical problem that affects the educational intent of the institution.

The commonly expressed points of view range from the most liberal to the most restrictive. If the institution decides to "educate for repatriation," it must also be prepared to consider the implications and to devise programs that will facilitate this goal. This may mean special programs for foreign students *different* from those for native students.** Or it may involve more tightly structured advisement practices, seminars, or discussion groups with foreign students to channel them toward an education more usable at home.

*The problem, however, also occurs with undergraduate students who *prolong* their education to avoid returning home.

**Cf. next section.

Modification of courses and degree requirements may be appropriate if the institution chooses this position.

The institution's position may not need to be a hard and fast policy decision. Some institutions feel that their responsibility requires only persuasion toward return, with sufficient flexibility in the curriculum to make this possible. Other institutions refuse to define a position, except possibly for sponsored students; but even with sponsored students under supposedly binding contracts, there may well be a limit to the control that the institution can exercise over any graduate's future. Moreover, this is a responsibility shared with and by others, such as the student's home government, the sponsoring agent, and, perhaps, his potential employer. Making return attractive needs multi-lateral cooperation.

The "return problem" is more than an academic matter. Understandably, it has very personal overtones. The foreign student's recognition of the opportunities or limitations that await him back home cannot be dismissed. Perhaps a reliable advisory group, consisting of the department head, the academic adviser, and the Foreign Student Adviser, could explore with the foreign student his goals and obligations, and help him to understand and evaluate the alternate courses of action open to him. Together they can discuss the matter, without pressure for or against a return. If this is to be done, it should preferably be an on-going process. Most students need to give considerable thought to their ultimate decision over a period of time.

## INTER-INSTITUTIONAL OR REGIONAL COOPERATION

While the advising of foreign students cannot itself be a practical inter-institutional venture, there are some related activities that might merit exploration with other institutions in the area, for example:

### Related to Academic Advising

1. A colloquium for administrators, faculty, and advisers on "Education for Foreign Students" — degrees, requirements, special programs, substitutions, course adjustments, credits; the role of foreign students in class; the return problem.
2. Possible development of special inter-institutional programs especially tailored to foreign students' needs (as supplements to rather than substitutes for regular institutional requirements);
3. Seminars or discussion groups for foreign students on application of learning skills to home country's needs; possible involvement of returned Peace Corps volunteers or other American students especially qualified or interested.
4. "Modernization" seminars for foreign students from developing countries; possible involvement of volunteers from local industries to orient students to the special technological development and methodology of this country, investigating areas of similarity and difference to their own countries, and the problem of transmission of skills and knowledge to fellow countrymen.

### Related to Personal Advising

1. Inter-institutional seminar on "Learning in Another Culture" — explanation or comparison of the predictable "cross-cultural" experiences; possible involvement of veteran foreign students, selected Host Fami-

lies, residence hall counselors, interested American students and faculty, especially "cultural advisers or experts," if available.

2. A similar seminar, but designed for academic advisers and faculty teaching foreign students in class; or information sessions on various culture patterns for Foreign Student Advisers of area institutions.
3. Group advising, especially adaptable if the number of foreign students at any one institution is very small and the "problems" are minor and not deeply personal or confidential.

## CONCLUSION

The topic of the academic and personal advising of foreign students is inexhaustible. For every new foreign student, with his special concerns, problems, needs, and experience, a new *Guideline* could be written. For every institution newly or long engaged in international educational programs, a different approach could be taken. This *Guideline* has attempted to present only the overview and tried to make it applicable to a wide and diverse readership. The size of the foreign student population is not the deciding factor. Advising is, after all, a one-to-one relationship.

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*The fourth revision of *Immigration Regulations,* Handbook for Foreign Student Advisers, Part V, National Association for Foreign Student Affairs, New York, is in progress and anticipated by September, 1966.

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